

Lincoln and the Church Beside the Highway

By JOHN WILLIAM HAMILTON, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church

Where is it Abraham Lincoln has not gone? Men have builded him a sepulcher with a towering monument. But the stone has been rolled away from the door of the sepulcher and his spirit is abroad in all the inspirations of men and nations. He has been given right of way overseas—his name stands for everything for which the United States has gone into the world war. Henceforth his memory, "with malice toward none and charity for all," shall be embalmed in the peace and good will of all nations.

Now that every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill shall be made low for him we are making straight the Lincoln Highway across the continent. He will travel with the man in the street, from ocean to ocean. Beside this highway, far along from the starting point, quite in the center of Ohio, a noble band of one of our immigrant populations has erected for worship a splendid building, costing more than \$40,000. They have christened it the "Lincoln Highway Methodist Episcopal Church."

Invited to come and dedicate this new temple, I considered with a question the journey a third of the way across the country in the heat of the summer. But I had known something of the troubles our immigrant people had been having. No one of them had been having more trouble than the one which this Ohio community represented. The invitation stated also that there was a debt of \$18,000 to be raised. I knew a big debt for that people would be a battle. But I was reminded that Philip Sydney had said to his brother: "Whenever you hear of a good fight go to it." *Veni, vidi, vici.*

Could the most provincial and selfish of our "patriots" know the thoughts and works of the good people I found in this Highway Church he would not be ashamed to call them brethren. Yet they were Germans! It seems never to have occurred to some minds that there are Germans and Germans. For instance, how many Americans there are who know little of the revolution of 1848. Think of making a law to forbid Carl Schurz or Franz Sigel to edit a paper in the German language for Germans in America who cannot read English!

The little enterprising city of Bucyrus, county seat of Crawford County, O., is the center of a German settlement, nearly or quite seventy-five per cent of the population of both the city and the county being Germans, by birth or descent. In the most conspicuous corner of the city stands the Lincoln Highway Church, of Tudor-Gothic architecture, exquisite in taste in both its construction and equipment. Adjacent to the church is the new parsonage and around both of the buildings is a clean-terraced, close-clipped lawn. When the congregation had assembled for the dedicatory exercises there was every indication of prosperity. I was told that there were 120 families of the congregation that lived in the country round about, all of whom, except six families, owned automobiles. It was evident "the sinews of things" were somewhere about, for at the close of the day the \$18,000 had all been provided for, making \$43,000 the church had paid in two years.

PATRIOTS NEED NO ANCESTORS

Voltaire says somewhere: "He who serves his country well has no need of ancestors." From the service given their country by these good people, if only observed when their tongues were having holiday, their ancestors could never be discovered.

More volunteers for the army enlisted from the county than from any other county in the State of Ohio. For subscriptions to the Liberty Loan bonds, to the Red Cross and the Young Men's Christian Association the amounts in every instance were in excess of the askings. The Highway Church subscribed \$30,000 toward the Liberty Loan, \$1,500 toward the Red Cross, and the women of the church, as they had been, were still diligently employed in making garments for the soldiers. The service flag over the pulpit showed that eight young men of the congregation had gone into the army. There are twelve churches in Bucyrus,

but the pastor of this German church was selected to go abroad and speak for the Liberty Loan. In the superintendent's district 425 soldiers had gone to the war from the German churches, six from the preachers' families. Included in their number are a colonel, major and two captains. A brigadier general has gone from the county.

THE ANTI-GERMAN MOVEMENT

Little wonder that these loyal Americans feel keenly the disposition to punish them for bearing names or having tongues that they or their fathers brought with them from what is now an enemy's country. They had come to this country to be Americans and are such in all but the speech of their many members who had recently come from Europe. They acknowledged the right of the State to make of the whole country an English-speaking people and were sending their children to the schools to this end. They said therefore it would seem to be a bit of comic opera, if it were not for the evident injustice, in their being compelled to listen to some of the indiscriminate, invidious assaults made nowadays upon everything which has ever had any German association. One man advocates the expulsion of every copy of Goethe from all the public and private libraries in the country. Another makes a bonfire of his German Bible; a wedding party refuses to have played the Lohengrin march, not knowing, probably, that Wagner himself was driven away from Germany as a revolutionist, and that he has been some time dead; a college refuses to have Immanuel Kant longer in the course of study, forgetting that he was the author of Permanent Peace. If matters continue at this pace, said a very intelligent brother, we may expect to hear some one object to the doctrine of justification by faith, because Martin Luther was a German. I have before me a contribution to one of the papers, by a man who would have a law prohibiting the utterance of a German word on this side of the seas because it reminds him of the atrocities committed in Europe. The preacher answered this by saying: "How about the multi-form dialects of Austria and Bulgaria, to say nothing of the desecrated language of Turkey?" Does he not know it is not the language, but the people and their civilization which infest his memory. I hold in my hand a lengthy paper printed in one of the greatest dailies in the country and contributed by a cultivated lady, in which she says: "I would suggest the government appoint a committee of expert philologists, whose duty it shall be to expunge from our language every word or part of a word that is of German derivation." She then selects this verse from the psalmist for an example: "And though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff comfort me." She adds: "Here are twenty-nine words, of which twenty-five are of German origin." Was it not, my brother asked, Emerson who said: "English speech is the sea that receives tributaries from every region under heaven?"

WHAT IS THE TROUBLE?

Is it our extreme precaution or excess of martial spirit that is driving us over-mad? I have heard it said: "The possession of supreme power is inevitably fatal to the free exercise of reason." It would seem so. "I know not a greater advantage than a due appreciation of the worth of an enemy." We need not recede one jot from any point that reason and prudence have bid us pursue. We express our denunciation of assassins among us through the prison and on the scaffold. But let us not punish our friends for what our enemies are doing. And let us permit our friends to express their judgments as if the case were reversed. "Force without judgment falls by its own weight." I do not quite understand why this time is taken to urge upon our friends in the German Methodist Conferences that they allow the English-speaking Conferences to absorb them. If they are not inclined to do so, why insist? I do not know why it is proposed to take the Apologete away from them, when it utterly demoralizes them to do so. They are our brothers and no longer "strangers from the

covenant of promise." The paper promotes every Methodist enterprise and benevolence among them. Let us hear them and not force them. To use a friend as though he were an enemy is to make yourself an enemy. Why should the Methodists be doing this thing? The Presbyterians and Baptists are doing no such thing. The Evangelical Association would very soon offer our German Methodists the privileges which we deny them. "Climbing plants are endowed with irritable organs, which, when they touch any object, clasp it." There is no better or more successful work among foreign-speaking peoples in this country than that which is being done by our German Methodists. And it is to our shame that our English-speaking churches do not attract the foreign-speaking peoples into their local communions. They will not do the work which is being done now so successfully by the German Methodists if assimilation by force is to be the rule. The enlightening and cheering influences of American association instead of compulsory treatment naturalizes foreigners unconsciously and makes good Americans. Atmospheric pressure has guaranteed solidarity hitherto, so let the process go on. Already it is sending German young people to the English-speaking churches and introducing in some of the churches sermons in English a part of the day.

The President has given us a worthy example of brotherly treatment and encouragement in grouping forty-two nationalities of loyal Americans at Mount Vernon, where they voluntarily assembled on the Fourth of July. "Thine own friend, and thy father's friend forsake not: neither go into thy brother's house in the days of thy calamity: for better is a neighbor that is near than a brother afar off."

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